

DBQ Project – Apartheid-Era South Africa



DBQ: How did the minority, white South Africans, maintain control over the majority, black South Africans?

Document 1 – A timeline of South African history

1651: Dutch settlers arrive in South Africa. In 1756, they import slaves from West Africa, Malaysia, and India, establishing the dominance of whites over non-whites in the region.

1867: Diamond mining begins in South Africa. Africans are given the most dangerous jobs, are paid far less than white workers, and are housed in fenced, patrolled barracks. Oppressive conditions and constant surveillance keep Africans from organizing for better wages and working conditions.

1910: The Union of South Africa is formed. English and Dutch are made official languages. The all-white government decides that blacks can vote but cannot hold office.

1912: The African National Congress is formed. This political party aims to organize Africans in the struggle for civil rights.

1913: The Native Lands Act gives 7.3% of the country's land to Africans, who make up 80% of the population. Africans are prohibited from owning land outside their region. Africans are allowed to be on white land only if they are working for whites.

1946: African mine workers are paid twelve times less than their white counterparts and are forced to do the most dangerous jobs. Over 75,000 Africans go on strike in support of higher wages. Police use violence to force the unarmed workers back to their jobs. Over 1000 workers are injured or killed.

1948: The Afrikaner National Party wins elections on a platform of strict racial segregation. Apartheid becomes the law of the land.

1. What are two ways that Africans were discriminated against by the white government?
2. What happened when Africans tried to protest poor working conditions?

Document 2 – Statistical Comparison (1978)

Apartheid and the People of South Africa		
	<i>Blacks</i>	<i>Whites</i>
Population	19 million	4.5 million
Land Allocation	13 percent	87 percent
Share of National Income	< 20 percent	75 percent
Ratio of average earnings	1	14
Minimum taxable income	360 rands	750 rands
Doctors/population	1/44,000	1/400
Infant mortality rate	20% (urban) 40% (rural)	2.7%
Annual expenditure on education per pupil	\$45	\$696
Teacher/pupil ratio	1/60	1/22

Figure 1: Disproportionate Treatment circa 1978. Source: [Leo80]

1. According to the table, what are three ways that whites had better living conditions than blacks in South Africa in 1978?

Document 3 – The Apartheid Laws of South Africa

Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, of 1949

Prohibited (made illegal) marriages between white people and people of other races.

Immorality Amendment Act, of 1950

Prohibited adultery, attempted adultery or related immoral acts (extra-marital sex) between white and black people

Group Areas Act, of 1950

Forced physical separation between races by creating different townships (neighborhoods) for different races

Pass Laws, of 1952

Forced black people to carry identification with them at all times. It was a criminal offence to be unable to produce a pass when required to do so by police. No black person could leave his/her township unless going to work, and must show pass upon entering the white township.

Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, of 1953

Forced segregation of all public building and public transportation with the goal of ending contact between whites and other races. “White Only” and “Non-Whites Only” signs were put up.

Terrorism Act, of 1967

Any person who uses violence to protest against the government of South Africa may be put in jail without trial. White men who encourage Africans to disobey the apartheid laws may be fined, jailed, or both.

1. In what ways did the apartheid laws help whites maintain control over non-whites?
2. Which law do you think was the most unjust? Why?